United Nations S/PV.5509

Security Council

Sixty-first year

Provisional

5509th meeting

Wednesday, 9 August 2006, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Nana Akufo-Addo	(Ghana)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Mayoral
	China	Mr. Liu Zhenmin
	Congo	Mr. Ikouebe
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	France	Mr. Duclos
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Oshima
	Peru	Mr. Ruiz Rosas
	Qatar	Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Slovakia	Mr. Burian
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mr. Manongi
	United States of America	Ms. Wolcott Sanders

Agenda

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Letter dated 3 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/610)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

06-46071 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace consolidation in West Africa

Letter dated 3 August 2006 from the Permanent Representative of Ghana to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (S/2006/610)

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Finland, Guatemala, Guinea, India, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Namibia, Nigeria, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Senegal, Sierra Leone and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, the representatives of the aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

It is so decided.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I should like to draw the attention of the members of the Council to document S/2006/610, which contains a letter dated 3 August 2006 from Ghana addressed to the Secretary-General.

It is with considerable pleasure that I welcome all participants to this meeting, in particular the foreign ministers, the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS and the other dignitaries who are with us today. Their participation in the meeting is highly appreciated.

I also wish to commend Ambassador Jean-Marc de la Sablière, Permanent Representative of France, for ably steering the affairs of the Council in July, a month that witnessed complex developments on the world scene, demonstrating how elusive peace can be even when it seems assured.

Despite the clamour of events in other regions of the world, it is appropriate that, with Ghana in the chair, the Council should devote at least one meeting to an examination of the situation in West Africa, using the lessons of our experience and all the peacemaking tools at our disposal to meet existing as well as emerging challenges. The aim should be not only to preserve the modest achievements of the region in the area of peace after nearly two decades of conflict, but also to address the underlying causes with a view to finding a lasting solution to the chronic instability.

In practical terms, peace consolidation is an all-encompassing enterprise, involving initiatives ranging from conflict prevention, management and resolution to peacekeeping and peacebuilding. It has to include a wide range of programmes and activities targeted at virtually every sector of national life. The actions must necessarily cover every stratum of society and, inevitably, span across national and regional boundaries to embrace the global community as a whole. When the world's leaders adopted the outcome document of the 2005 world summit last September, they reaffirmed that peace and stability thrive best on a foundation of sustainable development, itself inextricably linked with good governance. We need thus to root our peace strategies in realism by focusing less on quick fixes and more on underlying causes and durable solutions to the problem of instability.

The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, a body entrusted with the responsibility of healing the wounds of conflict and getting traumatized societies back on their feet, is very timely, being one of the most important outcomes of the current process of United Nations reform. Its role should enhance considerably the prospects for realizing comprehensive approaches to post-conflict recovery and, equally significantly, for ensuring the long-term engagement of the world community that is so critical to its success. Furthermore, in its interventions, the Commission should accord due recognition to the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are vital signposts on the long and winding road to sustainable peace in regions such as ours that have suffered years of instability and conflict.

West Africa is at a crossroads, and we must get our bearings right. Though the guns are falling silent over much of the region, there remain simmering tensions in states such as Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau. Somehow, these must be resolved before they become intractable. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the need to strengthen the foundations of peace even in those countries that have not experienced any major upheavals or conflicts, for we have to have consistently in view the fact that all the countries in the region are located in the bottom 25 per cent of the Human Development Index.

In May 1975, when the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was founded, there was good reason to be optimistic about transforming the region into an economic powerhouse. It was envisaged that once the artificial barriers of language, lopsided infrastructural development, backward technologies, together with duplicative and inefficient productive structures, had been transcended, the region could exploit the advantages of free movement of people, goods and services across boundaries to build strong economies for the well-being of its peoples. It seems that, thirty-one years later, the region is a mere shadow of the vision that inspired the integration project.

Undoubtedly, we have paid dearly for the political instability that has plagued the region for much of the post-colonial era and the precipitous decline in the living standards of our peoples, contrary to the promise of the independence movements. The reasons for this state of affairs are complex. Nonetheless, it is now generally accepted that many of the region's problems could rightly be blamed on authoritarian rule, lack of good governance and unaccountable leadership, all of which have contributed immeasurably towards impoverishing and polarizing our societies. In fact, it was only a matter of time before the region would become engulfed in violent conflicts, starting with Liberia, in December 1989 and spreading rapidly to Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and, indeed, threatening to destabilize the entire region.

It is to the credit of the United Nations, especially the Security Council, that it stood steadfastly behind ECOWAS throughout the darkest moments of conflict in the region. Ironically, these conflicts have also demonstrated the effectiveness and resilience of ECOWAS, which has managed against great odds to contain them in a volatile region, often working in close partnership with the United Nations, pursuant to the objectives of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations.

We recognize that ECOWAS is faced with severe constraints in terms of capacity and resources, despite having been at the forefront of peace operations throughout West Africa. In fact, it already has in place the legal framework and several institutional mechanisms for pursuing peace in our region. We welcome the exceptionally active role that the United Nations is playing in building the capacity of ECOWAS to undertake peace missions. We further acknowledge with gratitude the support of several countries in that regard.

From our perspective, therefore, the strategy for peace consolidation should focus on the following broad priorities: first, resolving ongoing conflicts as quickly as possible or at least preventing them from escalating; secondly, preventing a relapse into conflict in countries that have just emerged from war; thirdly, preventing a fresh outbreak of conflict; fourthly, developing the institutional framework and relevant capacities for peace initiatives; fifthly, mobilizing the required resources at the national, regional and international levels for peace initiatives; and sixthly, addressing the underlying causes of conflict in a comprehensive manner.

These broad objectives should translate into programmes and plans of action, the details of which can obviously not be fashioned at this meeting. Nonetheless, it is of the utmost importance that we

redouble efforts to resolve in the shortest time possible some of the issues that pose a clear and present danger to security in West Africa.

In particular, we should aim at achieving the complete demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of ex-combatants, particularly child soldiers and mercenaries. There are also critical cross-border issues that should be urgently addressed, such as the illicit trade and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, illegal dealings in mineral and natural resources, smuggling of narcotics, human trafficking, repatriation of refugees and resettlement of internally displaced persons.

Accelerated economic growth and sustainable development within the institutions of democratic governance must be the central goal of West Africa. After all the years of hard work and costly sacrifices, the global community must not settle for anything short of sustainable peace, stability and development. If the partnership envisaged under the Peacebuilding Commission should materialize, a stabilized West Africa, with its rich human and material resources, will succeed in building a modern and globally competitive economy capable of improving the living standards of its estimated 250 million inhabitants. By empowering ECOWAS, we make it a reliable partner for peace and wealth creation for the benefit not only of the region, but also of the entire world.

There is fortunately a silver lining to the dark clouds that have hovered over the region, and that is the evident determination of the West African peoples to construct new societies founded on the principles of democratic accountability, respect for human rights and the rule of law. That determination now dominates the political landscape of the region and represents the surest path to peace, progress and prosperity for West Africa. The example of Ghana's development under the iconic leadership of one of the region's new generation of democratic leaders, John Agyekum Kufuor, President of the Republic, is a good illustration of this evolution. Long may it endure.

I welcome the presence of the Secretary-General, His Excellency, Mr. Kofi Annan, at this meeting and give him the floor.

The Secretary-General: Let me start by congratulating you, Mr. President, and your delegation, for organizing this important session and by expressing my pleasure to see you in the Chair.

While we all remain deeply preoccupied by events in the Middle East, as you said earlier, I am heartened that we have gathered here today for this important discussion on peace consolidation in West Africa. Let me extend a warm welcome to the ministers who have joined us, as well as to the Executive Secretary Ibn Chambas of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

Let me also welcome my Special Representative for West Africa, Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. I'm sure I speak for all of us in expressing gratitude for his important and tireless contribution so far.

Political stability and prosperity continue to elude most West African countries. The region continues to be plagued by grave and widespread shortcomings with regard to governance. That prevents it from taking advantage of its rich natural resources and fulfilling its potential for social and economic development.

We know all too well the close connections between different conflicts in West Africa, and we have learned the hard way that we need a holistic approach to them. Insecurity has no respect for national boundaries. These conflicts often start in one country and in no time spread to its neighbours and become a regional problem.

Here, I think we need to congratulate the West African leaders for their willingness to become engaged in conflicts in the region, because there had been a tendency to say we do not interfere; it is an internal affair of this or that country. Unfortunately, these problems, as I have said, do not remain internal for long. They create refugees, they create instability in the region, they scare away investors. So what starts as a problem for one country invariably becomes a regional problem, and I am happy that the countries are engaging it.

I think it is extremely important that we focus on ending the conflicts in the region so as to be able to tackle the essential tasks of economic and social development. For peace to prevail, and to last, we are seeking to develop meaningful peacebuilding initiatives, including reconciliation and confidence-building processes, as well as mechanisms to strengthen the rule of law. This is essential to support fragile post-conflict countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau.

Too many times, in international responses to post-conflict situations, we have suffered from the same weaknesses — shortage of funds, lack of international coordination and a tendency to leave too soon. That can reverse hard-won results and undermine attempts to build solid States and societies.

That is why Member States decided to create the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission, which held its first meeting in June. And it was for all those reasons that the United Nations established an Office for West Africa, based in Dakar, to develop a regional strategy. That work involves continuing efforts to prevent conflict, as demonstrated in the Organization's support for Nigeria and Cameroon when they reached agreement in June on ways to implement a settlement of the four-decades-long dispute over Bakassi.

Through the presence of three United Nations peacekeeping missions and one peacebuilding support office in the subregion, the United Nations is demonstrating its commitment to efforts to end the cycle of violence that has destroyed so many lives and so much infrastructure. We are committed to continuing to work with members of the subregion on the journey to sustainable peace — and you can count on us.

The President: I now give the floor to Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

Mr. Ould-Abdallah (*spoke in French*): I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, for having taken the good initiative of organizing this meeting, which attests to the importance that the Security Council attaches to the questions of peace and security in West Africa.

I shall begin with two comments.

First, West Africa is a region in transition: political transition from the era of single parties to multiparty democracy, but also economic transition from State-run economies to the private sector. The transition is also demographic, and this is a new and important problem. The population is largely young. Of the 270 million inhabitants in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), almost sixty per cent are less than 30 years old. A great many of those young people are unemployed, so instead of being a source of hope they are a threat to stability, despite themselves. For two decades war has been their primary employer.

Secondly, informal migration — sometimes called clandestine migration — of young people is gradually becoming a major political challenge for the Governments of the subregion and for the international community.

These are new threats. Much progress has been made in West Africa. The Council should reinforce its support for those efforts, especially to consolidate progress and preventive action in the face of new threats.

In terms of threat — and I insist on this point, we do not read about it much in the press or in the reports — the northern and eastern borders of the West African subregion are porous and fragile, as are the borders between States. Those zones are areas of legitimate commerce, but they also shelter criminal activities such as trafficking in arms, drugs and natural resources.

In the southern area, along the Gulf of Guinea, as in the Sahel, there are religious groups — evangelists and Islamists. Social functions that formerly were performed by the State are now being carried out by these groups — health centres, schools and wells, for example. Alongside those two religious groups, the older, well-established Islamic brotherhoods and the Christian churches, especially the Catholics, are less and less visible.

Another emerging threat that I wish to mention is the development of piracy on the high seas.

Notwithstanding all these challenges to be monitored, the integration of West Africa is continuing to make progress. The subregion is more integrated politically and economically than it was in the past. The voice of ECOWAS is increasingly asserting itself in crisis management. Here we should give credit here to the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mr. Ibn Chambas, who is with us today. Credit is also due to Nigeria, which increasingly is becoming the indispensable State of the subregion. Nigeria and Ghana provide eighty per cent of the ECOWAS budget.

The commitment of the United Nations is accepted in West Africa; the Organization is a factor largely accepted by the people. Missions in the subregion include my office, the United Nations Office for West Africa, and the missions in Sierra Leone,

Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire. Those missions are complementary. They meet regularly to exchange information and experience and to design a coherent, integrated approach. That approach, which is very effective at the level of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, enables the United Nations to share its human and logistic resources and to speak with a single voice in crisis management.

On several occasions the Security Council has recognized and encouraged this inter-mission collaboration, for instance in its presidential statements S/PRST/2004/7, of 25 March 2004, and S/PRST/2005/9, of 25 February 2005. That Security Council support is valuable to us in order to better carry out the mandates entrusted to us.

I believe there has been an evolution in Africa that should be seen beyond this, and that is the evolution at the people's level. To illustrate my point I have brought something to show how much West Africa and its people are connected, including with the Security Council. I have brought with me a little radio that costs less than a dollar and that makes it possible to follow the news on FM — and I am not doing public relations for the BBC or for Radio France Internationale or the Voice of America, but one can listen to news on these little radios. I think that each Council member should have one of these radios just to understand my point. They cost less than $1 each, and people can keep abreast of the news by using them.

Thus, the people are well-informed and interconnected. We need only think back to the Africa of 1960, when many people did not read and were not informed, to see how things have changed. Everything that the Council does is followed closely. People are increasingly connected, not only in capital cities, but in all parts of the world. Thanks to this connectivity, people are better informed and more demanding of their Governments and of the international community. Through radio and television, the discussions that take place here are closely followed and understood in the countryside and in the remotest villages.

In supporting conflict management and crisis resolution, the Security Council must pay particular attention to countries in transformation. These are stable States moving towards democratization, but they are still fragile. Their institutional capacities must be reinforced and vulnerable populations must be assisted, as appropriate.

Before concluding, I would like to stress that next year is an election year. Elections are an exercise in democracy, but they are also a time of tension. Elections are due to take place next year in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

In conclusion, the following priorities deserve attention: first, youth unemployment and its impact on national and regional peace and stability; secondly, unauthorized immigration and its increasing impact on local government and international relations; thirdly, peaceful democratic change of Government as a means of preventing conflict. How can we ensure the peaceful handover of power and avoid coups d'états, violence and civil wars? Fourthly, rapid urbanization and increasing insecurity are also a priority: 38 per cent to 40 per cent of West Africans live in capital cities. Finally, despite ECOWAS conventions on the matter, the free circulation of people and goods in West Africa has been difficult to maintain — in particular because of roadblocks and the constant harassment of the private sector. The private sector in Africa must be supported as a way of ensuring progress.

The President: I thank Mr. Ould-Abdallah for his briefing and for his thoughtful gifts.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States.

Mr. Chambas: It is certainly a pleasure to see you, Sir, presiding over this body, and I deem it a great honour to have been invited to participate in today's important open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa. Your country, Ghana, is one of the poles of democracy, stability and growth within the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and has been at the forefront in working to ensure peace, stability and democracy in West Africa. Our collective efforts have yielded positive dividends, as peace and normalcy gradually return to the West African region. We commend you for this brilliant initiative.

I would like to express appreciation to the United Nations, especially the Security Council and the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for their solidarity and tremendous support in facilitating peace in war-torn and conflict-infected West African countries. The United Nations was our partner in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, and it is currently our partner in Côte d'Ivoire. As the global body with a mandate for ensuring peace and security in the world,

the United Nations is playing its appropriate role in the peace process in West Africa.

Let me preface my statement with some general observations. Conflict in West Africa is a serious threat to global peace and security and requires global attention and priority. The youth crisis in West Africa, which is partly the fallout of prolonged conflict in some West African countries and the debilitating economic situation, is potentially explosive in West Africa and poses serious migration challenges for Western countries in Europe and North America.

It is cheaper and easier to invest in and consolidate peace than it is to contain and resolve conflicts. Peace consolidation is a proactive, rather than a reactive, response to threats to peace.

As I said earlier, the United Nations has been a major partner in the peace process in West Africa. The United Nations has also taken a bold initiative in creating the Peacebuilding Commission to support post-war countries in the process of peacebuilding and national recovery. As the Secretary-General rightly observed, the Peacebuilding Commission is designed to fill a gaping hole in the peace activities of the United Nations and is meant to assist countries in their transition from war to peace and stimulate stability, democracy and development. This is highly commendable. From July 2004 to June 2005, it is estimated that the United Nations spent about $4.5 billion on peacekeeping operations. That expenditure would not have been worthwhile without strong back-up in terms of post-conflict peace consolidation. That is because there is the possibility of a backlash if urgent steps are not taken by the international community, led by the United Nations, to scale-up peacebuilding initiatives and activities for the peoples and Governments of post-conflict countries.

Pro-peace forces must be reinforced, while institutions, infrastructure and facilities must be reconstructed. Peace is still very fragile in many post-conflict countries in West Africa, where the United Nations has assisted us in facilitating peace. Also, there are new threats to peace in some hitherto fairly stable countries such as Guinea and Guinea-Bissau. In Liberia, for example, while the country installed a new democratic Government, headed by Africa's first elected woman president, Her Excellency, Ms. Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, on 16 January 2006, the country needs tremendous support to put it on the path of irreversible peace.

Peace consolidation for West African countries will include the following four major components: the rebuilding of democratic institutions, including the judiciary, parliament and the civil service; security sector reform to establish competent, truly national security forces that are well equipped and can adequately protect lives and property; support for the economic capacity of the Government to rebuild destroyed infrastructure and deliver social services to the people; and private sector development to create jobs and economic opportunities for the large army of unemployed people, especially youth.

There are several ways through which the international community, especially the United Nations, can assist in the process of peace consolidation in post-war countries. These include budget support programmes. In most cases, post-conflict countries do not have the fiscal basis to raise the revenue needed for their budgetary obligations. They depend largely on foreign aid and support for their budgets. This constitutes a major means by which the international community can facilitate the stability of a new Government and put it on a sustainable path.

The second way is project facilitation, especially the reconstruction of infrastructure. In many post-conflict countries in West Africa, the social infrastructure — electricity, water, roads, et cetera has — either collapsed during the war or is barely functional. The reconstruction of those facilities is a major challenge to new Governments in many post-conflict countries, which is germane to peace consolidation. Liberia and Sierra Leone are good cases in point.

The third way is institutional capacity enhancement. Key institutions central to effective governance either have been weakened or are virtually non-functional in many post-war countries. Those institutions include the judiciary, civil service, parliament and security forces. They need both human capacity enhancement and the provision of required institutional facilities and resources. For instance, conducting elections is an arduous challenge for post-conflict countries; so is maintaining law and order. The international community can target those strategic governance sectors for capacity support.

The fourth way is policy formulation. Many post-conflict countries have a dearth of capacity in the area of policy formulation, especially with regard to the economy. The reason is that conflicts usually trigger the flight of human capital from conflict spots to other parts of the world, especially Europe and North America. To reinforce local capacity in the area of economic policy formulation, the international community, led by the United Nations, could help mobilize the diaspora human resources of each post-conflict country to assist it in the economic sphere. Liberia, for instance, has tremendous human resources in North America — resources that can be effectively harnessed in a systematic way for policy formulation and development priorities in that country.

There must be mutual accountability on the part of both the international community, which is assisting the post-conflict country, and the country itself. The country must conduct a regime of transparency, accountability and due process. While conditionalities should not be set for countries, it is important that the international resources mobilized for development be used judiciously as the country improves its capacity to generate its own resources internally.

The establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission is a welcome development. Africa, which has eight of the world's 17 United Nations peacekeeping operations in 2006, should qualify for the Commission's pilot scheme. West Africa, which has been an epicentre of conflict and war on the continent, should be a natural beneficiary of the work of the Commission.

However, the Peacebuilding Commission may not be in a position to take on many countries in its first few years of operation. Yet the challenge of peace consolidation and post-conflict reconstruction is urgent and requires that there be multiple options and strategies for assisting countries. Those options may include the following.

The first is continued support by various United Nations agencies for peace consolidation initiatives in West Africa. The United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) can be a focal point for coordinated peace consolidation efforts by United Nations agencies. We in ECOWAS are already working very closely together with UNOWA; we are engaging in very close collaboration with Mr. Ould-Abdallah and his colleagues in Dakar.

The second option is support for ECOWAS in its peace consolidation initiatives in the subregion. ECOWAS is undertaking various peacebuilding and peace consolidation initiatives in the West African subregion, including accelerating the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and regional integration programmes, improving the capacity of electoral management bodies, facilitating the establishment and strengthening of the capacity of national human rights institutions to protect human rights and addressing the humanitarian challenges of post-conflict reconstruction. ECOWAS has established a Peace Fund to help countries with post-conflict reconstruction.

A proactive initiative composed of peace consolidation and post-conflict reconstruction is an urgent step to prevent conflict backlash in post-conflict countries. It is also an effective conflict prevention measure. It is easier and cheaper to invest in peace than to invest in conflict resolution. This United Nations initiative will yield greater peace dividends than the deployment of troops to contain conflicts and wars. ECOWAS fully supports this new approach by the United Nations and hopes that West Africa, which has been a hot spot of conflicts in the world, will be a major beneficiary of it.

The President: I thank Mr. Ibn Chambas for his generous comments on the development, positions and initiatives of Ghana.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than four minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the texts in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to His Excellency Sheikh Hamad bin Jassem bin Jabr Al-Thani, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar.

Sheikh Al-Thani (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to observe that in this Chamber today, there are two prominent sons of West Africa — specifically of Ghana — who bear the responsibility of high posts in the Organization: the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council. Both of them have demonstrated courage, energy, vitality,

commitment and leadership in carrying out their weighty responsibilities.

The topic before us today centres on the vital region of West Africa and its quest for the consolidation of peace. It is noteworthy that West Africa and my own region share a common denomination and are very much alike: both are rich in human and natural resources, yet are consumed by bloody conflict. Both regions have been denied the peace and stability that are necessary for their peoples to benefit from their riches.

Peoples and Governments in West Africa have suffered greatly over the years in terms of death and destruction, economic hardship, flows of refugees and displaced persons, and much more. It is both heart-warming and reassuring that the vital region of West Africa is now witnessing a resurgence of hope and stability. West Africa is closer than ever to consolidating regional peace. That achievement is, to a large extent, the result of political will and commitment at the national level, the support of regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union, and the successful efforts of the Secretary-General, a citizen of West Africa. Moreover, the summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference to be held in Senegal in 2009 will give us another opportunity to enhance the role of international organizations in that regard.

It is extremely critical that the international community support the Governments of Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia in their difficult transition from a state of war to consolidating the conditions for peace. We note with gratitude that considerable progress has been made in both political and constitutional terms, and we applaud the peoples and the leadership of West Africa for that.

Yet diligence and success in the areas of politics and governance do not by themselves lead to the consolidation of peace, stability and human security. Peace consolidation is a prerequisite for sustainable peace. When the contemporary history of West Africa is written, it must record not only the millions who have died, but also the thousands who have been displaced and the hundreds of instances of destroyed infrastructure and property.

West Africans, in conjunction with the international community, must create new roads to stability and recovery; it is also essential that West African States strive for social and economic reconstruction. That is the essence of peace consolidation. The journey to peace in West Africa will be long and hazardous if the region is easily destabilized. Therefore, utmost attention must be paid the socio-economic dimensions of peace, in order to prevent a recurrence of violence and further destabilization.

Peace consolidation requires a creative approach by the international community. The following are key prerequisites for sustainable peace. New institutional frameworks must be created to galvanize national policy, in particular infrastructure and social institutions that inculcate a sense of belonging and responsibility towards family, community and country. Secondly, human resource development in West African countries must be reviewed, with a focus on the central role of the family in enhancing social integration, and addressing the critical issues of youth unemployment, the brain drain, the hosting of refugees by neighbouring States and refugee flows. Thirdly, a creative look at rebuilding the education systems must be undertaken within a national strategy of nation-building. Finally, there must be a mechanism to capitalize on peace initiatives and to support existing regional activities and enhance coordination between them and international peacebuilding mechanisms. A partnership between the Peacebuilding Commission and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding is also of utmost importance.

For all its current successes, West Africa needs considerable financial support from the international community at large, and particularly from the donor community. It is not enough to allocate funds in the areas of governance, the rule of law, the conduct of free and fair elections and the promotion of democracy and human rights. Peace consolidation requires the mobilization of resources in social sectors such as health, education and welfare. It is through those social sectors that, when adequate financial resources are allocated, we will be able to address the problems of child soldiers, the disabled, orphans and refugees. Addressing the needs of those social groups is a strategic priority for the Governments of West Africa. In this era of interdependence and globalization, the developed countries have a moral obligation to assist in such efforts.

This high-level open debate has once again shown that the Security Council must recognize education as a vital tool for enhancing and consolidating peace, security and stability. It is time for education to be part of a peace and security strategy, and for it to assist in the transition of societies from war to peace.

It is our hope and expectation that in years to come West Africa will see a rising sun of possibilities and a prosperous future for its peoples. The State of Qatar has extensive relations with the countries of West Africa and will strengthen its economic, political and cultural ties in order to contribute to the consolidation of peace in that region.

The President: I thank Sheikh Al-Thani for his generous comments addressed to the Secretary-General and to me.

On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Youssouf Bakayoko, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Bakayoko (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, on your initiative to hold this open debate in the Security Council — of which your country, Ghana, holds the presidency for the month of August — on a subject that I believe is most timely: peace consolidation in West Africa. I thank you for inviting Côte d'Ivoire, through me, to participate. I congratulate the French delegation on its impressive work during its July presidency of the Council. I also welcome the presence of Ministers for Foreign Affairs and other important figures, including Mr. Ibn Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

To the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, I convey my delegation's gratitude for everything he is doing for peace and stability in West Africa.

Today's debate is highly relevant for my country, which, as the Council is aware, has been striving — with the assistance of the international community and in particular of the United Nations and the Security Council — to emerge from a serious political and military crisis, whose destructive effects affect the entire West African subregion. It is also timely for a number of States of the subregion that have recently emerged from long crises that have had a multitude of effects. This initiative is therefore commendable and once again attests to the spirit of solidarity that Ghana and its President, His Excellency Mr. John Kufuor, have always shown in matters related to peace and development in Africa in general and in our subregion in particular.

As I said, the topic before the Council today is doubly important, first because it concerns peace consolidation in our subregion and, thus, our future. Indeed, given the many challenges posed at the beginning of the twenty-first century — such as globalization and technological change, which themselves raise serious concerns about the future of mankind — African peoples in general and those of West Africa in particular are experiencing feelings of fragility in the face of serious conflict or a climate of destabilization.

During these confusing times, people thus direct their gaze — full of concern but also full of hope — to the United Nations. Such expectations are fully justified because, at this very moment, West African countries that have recently been liberated from armed conflict are trying to consolidate the peace they have regained. Others, such as my country, are working hard to overcome the obstacles they are still encountering on the irreversible path to lasting peace and reconciliation.

The holding of this meeting of the Security Council, the United Nations organ that takes decisions and concrete action, gives me reason for hope. I venture to believe that the Council will better understand the realities of the region and will do everything possible to further assist West African countries in their quest for tranquillity — a sine qua non for the economic and social development of the subregion.

The topic we are discussing today is important also because it places us right at the core of the raison d'être of the United Nations. The peoples of the United Nations created this great institution, inter alia, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.

The purpose of the United Nations is to promote peace, development and human rights — all things that are conducive to peace consolidation and which are still far from being a reality in Africa in general and in West Africa in particular.

Our meeting attests to the will and determination of our Governments to work, for peace, good governance and development in our subregion, with the ongoing support of the international community and the United Nations. That is why my delegation hopes, as do other participants, that our debates will yield the clarification we need to read the signs of the times, to interpret the complex realities of West Africa. We also expect that the conclusions of these discussions will lead to specific action that is lasting and oriented towards peaceful coexistence among the populations of our subregion.

This discussion calls upon us all, as I see it, to have a comprehensive concept of peace. The peace that we are trying to consolidate cannot be lasting unless we tackle simultaneously a strategy to reduce tension and poverty and a strategy to promote democracy and good governance. Peace cannot be guaranteed unless disputes are settled peacefully and conflicts are prevented in a context of the observance of human rights. We should no longer be preparing war or waging war to obtain peace, but rather supporting peace in order to prevent war, in the broadest possible meaning of that word.

West Africa seems to have lost its legendary tranquillity. It has become the theatre of many conflicts. Within certain States, ethnic disputes, political differences and conflicts of interest have been misunderstood or mismanaged and have degenerated into confrontation and civil war. Likewise, conflicts separate or tear apart neighbouring, fraternal countries because of border disputes that, for the most part, have been due to non-compliance with the sacrosanct principle of the inviolability of the borders inherited from the colonial era, as stipulated in the Charter of the African Union.

Our subregion needs peace. Like the whole continent, it is facing multiple scourges and ills, and it can no longer afford futile, costly wars among its peoples, still less among the citizens of the same country. To make peace a reality, dialogue, interaction, tolerance, respect for the human person and respect for life and the persistent search for consensus-based ways to deal with apparently contradictory interests, must, once again, become fundamental values for the populations and the governance of this subregion.

Furthermore, it is important that, in our States, justice be conceived as an ideal of responsibility and fairness, needed to protect the ordinary citizen in the exercise of his or her activities and to prevent and punish violations of those rights. Justice, supported by the citizenry is justice that takes into consideration the rights of the accused, the interests of the victim and the well-being of society at large. Our States must work to put in place that kind of justice in our countries.

However, I do believe that, in a post-conflict context, justice that is rendered too early can undermine a still fragile peace and call into question the still timid confidence among former enemies. Justice that is too late, on the other hand, could prevent a society from turning the page and entering a new era through the revelation of the truth aimed at achieving reconciliation of hearts and minds.

To bring about peace consolidation, our subregion also expects international partners to give us lasting support that can strengthen capacities for intervention and provide mechanisms for resolving existing disputes. It also expects constructive support for our democratization processes and efforts to build the rule of law as guarantees of peace and stability. Just as international peace and security are the responsibility of the United Nations under the Charter, likewise prevention in our subregion should be one of the primary responsibilities of regional and subregional organizations.

In peace consolidation in West Africa, special attention should be given to the proliferation and illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons in our States. This is a source of concern for the subregion. According to statistics, 90 per cent of the victims of these weapons are civilians, and 80 per cent are women and children. Peace consolidation also means developing a culture of peace among our peoples.

Peace consolidation cannot be brought about simply by tackling political and military problems. It should also be conceived in actions benefiting economic development, because, as was recognized by the Security Council following a meeting of Heads of State and Government on 31 January 1992, international peace and security do not mean merely the absence of war and armed conflict. Other non-military threats to peace and security have their source in the instability of an economic nature.

Poverty remains a threat to peace and stability. This is particularly true in West Africa, where, because of recurrent conflicts that have ruined the economies of

the subregion, the majority of States are also confronting the overwhelming burden of debt and the constraints brought on by structural adjustment policies and the depletion of private and public investment and official development assistance.

One of the consequences of those constraints is unemployment, particularly among youth. They have no jobs, and so they easily become a reservoir providing child soldiers and militias in the event of a conflict. Those situations provide a fertile ground for frustration, dissidence and violence. All of these things are definitely a source of instability.

The underdevelopment of our States remains a major challenge that we must and can meet together. The stability of our subregion and the development of our countries depend on that.

Accordingly, I wish to reaffirm, by way of conclusion, that peace and prosperity must be sought together, with the same devotion and the same priority as political stability, and they must be supported by economic development and the rule of law, with special stress being laid on the observance of human rights.

Let us achieve our common goal together, which is to promote democracy and share democracy and development in order, in the long run, to consolidate peace in our subregion.

The President: I thank His Excellency Mr. Bakayoko for his generous comments on the work of President Kufuor of Ghana.

I now give the floor to the representative of Guinea. On behalf of the Security Council, I extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Lamine Touré, Secretary-General in the Ministry of State in charge of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. Touré (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I should first of all like to express the regret of His Excellency Mr. Mamady Condé, Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, who, for reasons beyond his control, was unable to make this trip. He, therefore, entrusted me with extending his greetings and best wishes for every success.

Mr. President, I should also like to congratulate you for the excellent work done in the Security Council since your country has assumed the presidency. I can assure you of our full cooperation.

I am also pleased to express our full appreciation to the French delegation, for the way in which it conducted the work of the Council last month.

Your important initiative, Sir, of inviting us to New York to discuss and exchange views on the pertinent international matter of peace consolidation in West Africa, as well as on the efforts of our Governments to prevent and manage conflict, clearly demonstrates the Council's resolve to become more involved in the definitive settlement of conflicts in the subregion.

My delegation welcomes that initiative and notes that hotbeds of tension in West Africa over the past 15 years have been perpetuated, inter alia, by the lack of a relevant framework for peace consolidation based on such elements as the establishment of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; the restructuring of security forces; the effective implementation of national reconciliation programmes; national and international governance; the adoption and implementation of development plans; and a lasting settlement of cross-border problems.

That is why the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), conscious of its leading role, has become involved in the search for lasting solutions to the problems of peace, security and development, as clearly demonstrated by its technical meetings and the summit of subregional leaders.

While we welcome the successes achieved in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, we must note that the equilibrium in those States remains precarious and fragile. In Côte d'Ivoire, we have seen encouraging overall developments, but the peace process is entering a decisive phase with the upcoming elections and the settlement of related sensitive issues.

In that context, my delegation wishes once again to reaffirm the fact that, despite the willingness and determination of the subregion's leaders, our objectives will be achieved only when the international community, and the United Nations and donors in particular, heed our concerns and appeals for a lasting solution to the conflicts undermining our countries. It is also important to reinforce the active participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society, which play an important role in the prevention and settlement of conflicts and the consolidation of peace. Thus, the outstanding actions of, inter alia, the West African Network for Peacebuilding, the Mano River

Union Women's Network for Peace and traditional interlocutors deserve our congratulations and active support.

I cannot fail to mention the role played over the past 15 years by my country, the Republic of Guinea, in conflict prevention and in maintaining and consolidating peace in West Africa, especially in the Mano River basin, notwithstanding our own difficult national circumstances. The Republic of Guinea is not considered to be a country emerging from conflict, but it has suffered enormously from the various consequences of the troubles affecting four of the six countries with which we share borders, including a significant presence of refugees, environmental degradation, wear and tear on our social buildings, insecurity, the dissemination of diseases and so on.

It must also be noted that, from September 2000 through 2001, rebel attacks led not only to considerable loss of life and material damage, but also to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people throughout our national territory. All of this has had a negative impact on our national development programmes and has slowed growth. Moreover, for 16 years Guinea has not fully enjoyed the assistance it needs, despite numerous appeals and the enormous sacrifices it has made for regional peace and stability.

Nonetheless, my delegation welcomes the establishment within the United Nations of the Peacebuilding Commission and the transformation of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund into the Central Emergency Response Fund. We also welcome the United States' recent allocation of $32 million for underfinanced and forgotten crises, of which $1 is earmarked for my country. We also welcome the efforts of the African Development Bank to mobilize considerable resources for the ECOWAS Peace and Security Fund, recently launched in Guinea. While we extend our gratitude to our bilateral and multilateral partners, we appeal to the international community, through the Security Council, for greater assistance to my country, which, during the worst moments of crisis in the subregion, has made every effort to meet the challenges it has faced.

Conflict prevention and settlement, as well as peacebuilding, must be at the heart of our collective action. Without peace, stability and security, no development objective can be achieved. That is why the Government of Guinea, in cooperation with the United Nations Office for West Africa, intends to organize a subregional conference on strengthening good-neighbourliness and consolidating peace and security. This represents a comprehensive political approach that is necessary to allow us jointly to integrate the human dimension into our reflections on security. That meeting could spur participants to adopt mutual confidence-building measures to strengthen solidarity, peace and security within and among States members of the Union by signing a covenant of good-neighbourliness. In calling for the participation of ECOWAS, I know I can count on the material and financial support of the United Nations system to guarantee the success of the conference.

I also wish once again to express the readiness of the Republic of Guinea to continue to respect its African tradition of hospitality by providing humanitarian assistance to the distressed peoples of the subregion and by working tirelessly for the consolidation of peace.

In conclusion, my delegation hopes that our work will lead to tangible results commensurate with the expectations of our peoples.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The Russian delegation welcomes Ghana's initiative to have the Security Council meet to consider the most urgent issues relating to the consolidation of peace in the West African subregion.

Recent developments in Africa have clearly shown that the most important means of preventing internal conflicts are strengthening the rule of law and developing democracy and good governance. All of that is crucial to the States of West Africa, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea-Bissau, where, as a result of bloody conflicts, more than 2 million people have died, according to the estimates of the Economic Commission for Africa.

The Security Council's consideration of ways to settle the current conflict situations in West Africa has found quite clearly that the greatest difficulties are encountered when addressing problems related to the transitional period. Truces and peace agreements exist, but are not fully implemented. New Governments are established, but are systematically overwhelmed. Legislative activity is slow. Timetables for political processes are not observed. Election deadlines are systematically violated. Disarmament and demobilization programmes are implemented with

difficulty or simply obstructed. Impunity leads to the resurgence of massive violations of human rights and humanitarian law.

The new Peacebuilding Commission has a role to play in resolving problems relating to peace consolidation in West Africa. It recently commenced its work, and it has begun to consider how to assist Sierra Leone and Burundi.

Intensified cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is important for resolving problems related to peace consolidation in West Africa. ECOWAS initiatives aimed at resolving key issues facing its member countries deserve all possible encouragement. Naturally, such initiatives will be doomed to failure without specific support from leading donor countries and international financial institutions. The dire economic situation of Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and, to a certain extent, Sierra Leone could be a factor nullifying the international community's achievements towards final settlement of the conflicts in those countries.

In our view, post-conflict recovery and development assistance should be an important element of any international strategy to ensure peace and prevent conflict in Africa. The operational funds and programmes of the United Nations can play an important role in monitoring and analysing the risks of conflict arising in Africa. At the post-conflict recovery stage in West African countries, it is important to focus on preventing a relapse into crisis once an effective link has been forged between emergency assistance and follow-on action to support long-term sustainable development and the integration into society of the most vulnerable population groups. All of this should be subordinate to the main goal of achieving political stability in post-conflict countries.

As a permanent member of the Security Council and as current Chair of the Group of Eight (G-8), the Russian Federation attaches exceptional importance to the settlement of conflict in Africa and to helping African countries emerge from instability and attain economic prosperity. The search for solutions to such problems accounted for a significant portion of the agenda of the G-8 summit held at Saint Petersburg in July.

My country approaches the issue of cooperation with Africa from the standpoint of an open, equal and mutually advantageous partnership. That is also the basis on which we are prepared to participate in international assistance to build Africa's peace consolidation capacity, on the understanding that international assistance in that area should supplement, not replace, measures taken by African States themselves.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I wish at the outset, Sir, to welcome you and to thank you for coming to New York to preside over today's meeting. We are grateful also to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his presence at our meeting. I wish further to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their briefings.

In recent years, the Security Council has actively considered various conflict situations and cross-border issues in the West African region. The majority of the countries in the region, such as Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau, have attained basic stability and embarked on the right track, that of post-conflict reconstruction. Côte d'Ivoire is actively engaged in preparing for the general election planned for October of this year, which will mark a critical juncture in its peace process. The improvement of the internal situations of those countries provides favourable conditions for resolving the intricate issues of West Africa and will have a positive impact on the overall stability and development of the region. We commend the United Nations system, ECOWAS, the African Union and other relevant international organizations for playing an important role in that regard.

In spite of the achievements I have described, the current stability in those conflict situations is still extremely fragile, and numerous examples show that they could relapse into turmoil. Serious problems remain, such as the proliferation of illicit small arms and the use of child soldiers and mercenaries. Programmes of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration into society, as well as security-sector reform, are facing funding shortages. Meanwhile, depressed economic prospects, high youth unemployment and the existence of large numbers of refugees continue to be serious social problems. In addition, the humanitarian situation in some areas provides no cause for optimism. The West African region still faces numerous challenges on the way to genuinely sustainable development. The top priority at

present is to continue consolidating the hard-won peace and to prevent the achievements already gained from being squandered, while at the same time steadily exploring effective ways for West African countries to achieve development. I would like to emphasize the following points in that regard.

First, we support the formulation of a comprehensive strategy for peace consolidation in West African countries, starting from the perspective of the region itself. Post-war reconstruction is a tremendous endeavour, and the countries concerned should develop systematic plans, including in the areas of national reconciliation, institution-building, security-sector reform, the resettlement of ex-combatants, economic recovery and youth employment, while making every effort to maintain internal stability. Post-war reconstruction should be carried out with both short-term and long-term objectives in view, so that the vast majority of the population can benefit from the peace dividend as peace is further consolidated through a process of development. While the international community can provide assistance and support, the key issue here remains the efforts of the Governments of the countries concerned, which should act with a sense of ownership in the process. Assistance from the international community should not replace their work. Efforts should also be made to avoid rigid application of external models. Countries concerned should also fully cooperate with one another to address cross-border and other issues of common concern.

Secondly, agencies of the United Nations system, including international financial institutions, as well as regional and subregional organizations, have much to do in consolidating peace in the West African region. They should assist the countries concerned with their reconstruction by doing what they do best, such as providing financial assistance or professional support. The unique roles played in recent years by organizations such as the African Union and ECOWAS show an admirable attempt at united self-reliance by African countries. China supports further efforts on their part and hopes that they can build their capacity in order to play a more significant role in promoting peace and development in the West African region. In considering various situations in West Africa, the Security Council should probe the root causes of turmoil and conflict and should avoid addressing those problems in an isolated and fragmented manner. Meanwhile, the Security Council should take into account the special concerns of our African brethren and should exercise caution when applying sanctions in order to avoid a negative impact on the peace process.

Thirdly, the Peacebuilding Commission, which has attracted mounting interest and expectations from all sides since its establishment, has opened a new forum for discussing and responding to the peaceful reconstruction of West Africa. As an event of historic significance to West Africa and to the entire African continent, the establishment of the Commission provides an important opportunity for the systematic formulation of policies for peace consolidation in West Africa. The question of Sierra Leone has already been put on the agenda of the Commission. We hope that the Commission will make a good start in its work and that it will accumulate successful experiences so as to play a bigger role in the future. Members of the Commission representing various sides can put forward practicable comprehensive proposals in the areas of security, the economy, the social sector and the rule of law, based on their own perspectives and in the light of the actual situation of the countries concerned and the needs of their peoples. All of this will help the Commission to gradually carry out its work in an orderly manner.

The issues of West Africa, like other issues facing the African continent, boil down to development. No peace can be genuinely guaranteed without development. Realizing durable peace in West Africa not only requires addressing regional hot-spot issues, but also making substantial efforts to help countries of the region to tackle the root causes of the problems and to resolve issues in the area of development.

Peace and development in this region bear favourably on peace and development on the whole of the African continent and that of the entire world. Therefore, the United Nations should, in active cooperation with the countries in this region, make greater efforts to promote sustainable development so as to actively implement the important outcomes on African development from last year's World Summit. Meanwhile, greater attention should be given to the African factor in various follow-up measures.

China supports strengthened coordination among the various United Nations missions in this region and hopes that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa will facilitate such coordination. China is ready to join the international

community in contributing to resolving the cross-border issues of West Africa and consolidating peace in that region.

Mr. Mayoral (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina wishes to thank the delegation of Ghana for organizing this open debate on peace consolidation in West Africa. We welcome the presence of Minister Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo in conducting our deliberations. We also acknowledge and welcome the participation, among others, of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah. We also thank the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Mr. Ibn Chambas. We thank them for their statements and for their work for the United Nations.

My delegation attaches great importance to the issues that we are discussing today. Unfortunately, today they do not have the visibility nor the transparency that they deserve because the press is focusing on other events that unhappily are taking place in other geographic areas, as is the case today with the conflict in the Middle East.

Nevertheless, we wish to point out that the region of West Africa, which comprises 15 countries and has more than 260 million people living in a territory of five million square kilometres, has great political and economic relevance not only for the continent, but for the entire world. Some of these countries have managed to achieve a satisfactory transition from conflict to the establishment of constitutional and democratic regimes, as is the case of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau. Others, like Côte d'Ivoire, have embarked on the path towards the establishment of a similar political regime. All of these situations, with their own characteristics, have required great efforts and sacrifices as well as the commitment of both regional actors and the international community as a whole in order to achieve peace, security and sustainable development.

While each situation is different, there are common elements. In the first place, we must not forget that they share a colonial past that has obviously had influence in the institutional weaknesses from which all these new States are suffering. Other elements common to these crises and to the challenges facing these countries are the limited possibilities for economic growth, the need to strengthen and affirm the State authorities, and a limited experience in the management of public affairs and also, unfortunately, corruption.

Also, in some cases there is the question of the return of refugees and internally displaced persons; needed reforms in the security sectors; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants; illicit cross-border activities; the worrisome humanitarian situation that still persists in large areas of the region; the crucial role of justice and the struggle against impunity for serious crimes committed in the past; and the need for education and respect for human rights.

For all these reasons, we consider it necessary to adopt a coordinated approach in the search for lasting solutions to the conflicts in the region, one promoting the capacity of national institutions to address their root causes in the framework of a peace consolidation process. In this regard, it is important to underline the valuable contribution of regional actors such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the advantages of cooperative work between the United Nations and regional organizations, as experience with ECOWAS has demonstrated.

It is worth mentioning the contribution that the Peacebuilding Commission can make in the future in helping to build sustainable peace, preventing nations from sliding back into conflict, and assessing the existence of the elements essential for stability, from immediate humanitarian assistance to security conditions and efforts by authorities to strengthen their national capacities — to mention but a few of the necessary elements.

It will be necessary for all the actors involved to do our utmost for the cause of peace and national reconciliation in West Africa. Only through coordinated efforts recognizing the primary role of each Government and each people in developing its own conditions that favour growth will we succeed in reversing the negative consequences of conflicts that the region has suffered in the past decade. Only in this way will we leave behind the fragility that persists in some countries of the region and bring forth the fruits of a lasting peace.

Once again Argentina thanks you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate. We reaffirm our readiness to cooperate in this endeavour.

Finally, we wish to thank the delegation of Ghana for the draft presidential statement that it has prepared, and we reaffirm our readiness to support it.

Ms. Løj (Denmark): Let me begin by thanking you, Mr. Council President and Foreign Minister, for convening this meeting and focusing our attention on peace consolidation in West Africa, a situation which provides us with hope but at the same time keeps reminding us that the early stages of peace are fragile and need continued nurturing.

Before I continue, I should like to associate myself with the statement to be delivered by Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Conflicts in West Africa have taken a terrible toll in human lives, welfare and development, not only in the directly affected countries, but also in neighbouring States. The wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone have tragically demonstrated how conflict and State failure are contagious and how they leave a deadly trail by destabilizing their neighbours. Likewise, we know that the prosperity of one country is interdependent of the prospects of its neighbours.

I should like to focus on three areas which, in our view, call for particular attention: more efficient peacekeeping with a stronger focus on peacebuilding; ownership, leadership and partnership in peace processes; and the role of women in consolidating peace.

In West Africa we have seen increased cooperation in peacekeeping across borders, but there is still room for improvement. Better pooling of operational resources, including police capacity, and more flexible procedures for the transfer of troops are just two examples. Ways to enable peacekeepers to operate across borders should also be further explored. This could help in monitoring the flow of arms and of illegally exploited natural resources, as well as trafficking in humans, et cetera.

But more efficient peacekeeping is only a first step in post-conflict situations. A far more sustainable approach is to ensure that national security institutions are in place early on in the transition process. National police training and capacity-development programmes are already part of some integrated missions, but there is scope for integrating an even broader peacebuilding perspective into many of the mandates of peacekeeping operations. In doing so, we can provide a foundation and further facilitate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security-sector reform, and the rule of law and help to secure justice. Looking for best practices in this area could be an important task for the newly created Peacebuilding Commission.

Turning to the issues of ownership, leadership and partnership, let me underline that Africa, in particular West Africa, has provided us with useful experiences for the future. Regional organizations such as the African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have become key partners of the United Nations in the field of peace and security. Recent experiences have provided plenty of scope for working with African leaders seeking peaceful solutions to military crises. The AU's ownership of African and international efforts is evident, and the AU has played a commendable role in creating renewed momentum in, for instance, the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. Furthermore, the new International Working Group has been pivotal in ensuring necessary regional and international coordination and unity.

Through its Programme for Peace in Africa, Denmark has set aside more than $40 million over a five-year period to support Africa's own efforts to secure peace and stability on the continent. Through this programme, we are supporting the African Union, as well as subregional organizations, including ECOWAS, in strengthening their capacity in crisis preparedness and prevention, as well as in crisis management and response. In addition, we support strengthened collaboration with civil society, where many untapped resources, from early warning to conflict resolution, are available.

Finally, I should like to advocate a greater focus on women in conflict resolution and peace consolidation. There is a long history of women's participation in grass-roots efforts to minimize hostility and begin reconstruction and reconciliation. Yet women tend to take little part in formal peace processes and negotiations. War is hardest on women and children. They are the most vulnerable when wars tear apart entire societies, the social and economic infrastructure collapses and basic security is no longer present. In such situations of conflict, women take on multiple roles. They become the heads of families, and they hold communities together. In building sustainable peace, it must be recognized — across the board — that post-conflict initiatives are more successful when

women are given the opportunity to take their experiences further and to be an integral and equal part of peacemaking.

Mr. Vassilakis (Greece): Allow me first to welcome you, Mr. President, to New York and to the Security Council, and to thank you for coming here personally to discuss this issue. We thank you for having taken the initiative to hold today's thematic debate, because it is truly very important to examine the situation in West Africa from a regional perspective. I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for their briefings.

Greece fully associates itself with the statement to be made later by the Permanent Representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

Post-conflict civilian and military efforts, by both external and internal actors, are fundamental for peace consolidation. Their aim should be to prevent the recurrence of conflict and to establish the conditions for durable peace and sustainable development. Such efforts face significant political, policy, institutional and financial challenges, particularly in Africa — challenges that are distinct and specific to each region of the continent.

In West Africa, we are faced with a very real lack of coherent peace consolidation policies and strategies, which is a key obstacle to success. Peace consolidation efforts are considerably hampered by institutional fragmentation, as well as by insufficient resources. Lack of coherence and coordination in multilateral efforts often leads to individual actors pursuing personal interests, thereby undermining the possibility of overall success.

In West Africa — if our figures are correct — 60 per cent of the population is younger than 30 years of age. It is a well established fact that such young people are frequently marginalized and unemployed and can be easily recruited for wars. In fact, we can say that for the past 10 years, in many parts of West Africa, and particularly in Liberia, the biggest job provider has been civil war. Solving this problem is a long-term challenge which will continue to hamper peace consolidation efforts.

We hope that many of those challenges will be efficiently dealt with by the Peacebuilding Commission, whose overall goal is to reduce the chances of a country relapsing into violence after a peace agreement. With the selection of Sierra Leone among its first two cases, the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission indicated the importance of West Africa in this endeavour.

Nevertheless, we consider that our approach to these issues of peace consolidation will be more effective if it is formulated within a regional framework. Under such circumstances, peace consolidation in one country is unlikely to succeed if neighbouring countries remain at war or if peace efforts are not harmonized.

To date, peace consolidation approaches, instruments and funding arrangements have rarely been tailored to address the regional nature of conflicts in West Africa, and separate peace efforts have not been coordinated or sequenced. The Security Council has started to recognize this regional component and the interaction of the various efforts undertaken in each separate country. It is very important to coordinate the activities of the various United Nations missions and offices in the countries of the region so that, through common efforts, we will manage to achieve the best possible results. We hope that very soon the Peacebuilding Commission will also move in that direction and will include all the countries of the area that are emerging from conflict in a regional strategic effort of peace consolidation.

The emphasis of peacekeeping is on the short term. It seeks to stabilize an immediate post-conflict situation, provide security and monitor ceasefires and peace agreements. Development policies, in contrast, have a more comprehensive and long-term perspective. Peace consolidation falls in between peacekeeping and development, as it addresses the challenges of the medium term, namely, to consolidate the existing peace and build the foundations for development in the future.

There is a short-term aspect, however, in peace consolidation, particularly in Africa. It requires immediate and extensive financial resources and investment. In West Africa, insufficient funding remains a significant obstacle to peace and development efforts. External assistance is only a temporary, short-term tool that should gradually fade

away, replaced by the building of solid foundations for sustainable economic development in each and every country. In West Africa, important activities in this sector should include: the transparent and accountable management of natural resources; combating youth unemployment; jump-starting the economy; wealth-sharing and the equitable distribution of resources; long-term economic growth and investment; the provision of health, social and educational services; and reform of the banking and financial sectors. The Peacebuilding Commission has to work closely with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, national authorities and the Economic Community of West African States in order to achieve those goals.

In conclusion, the challenges of consolidating peace in Africa are immense, yet the benefits are truly overwhelming. Overall, success will depend on the provision of sufficient resources and the longevity and strength of political commitment. It will also depend on the application of the most appropriate elements of peace consolidation. Finally, success will depend on the designing of a more effective strategy in the application of appropriate elements of regional peace consolidation.

Mr. Ruiz Rosas (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru welcomes your presence, Mr. Minister. We congratulate you on the way in which the delegation of Ghana has been presiding over the work of the Security Council and on this initiative to address peace consolidation in West Africa within the Council. We also appreciate the presence this morning of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire and the Secretary-General in the Ministry of State in charge of Foreign Affairs of Guinea, as well as the statements made by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa.

This is an opportunity to comprehensively consider this problem in a region where political, social, economic or security changes in one State can immediately affect its neighbours. My delegation wishes to limit its statement to highlighting five aspects related to the achievement and consolidation of peace in this part of the African continent.

First, we believe that we must not confuse calm with peace. Calm is superficial and consists only of the fleeting absence of armed violence. Peace transcends it and implies harmonious basic social interaction. Recent history has shown us that this erroneous perception has meant that peacekeeping forces are withdrawn prematurely, that conflicts seemingly overcome have reappeared and that the peoples involved lack confidence in the effectiveness of peace processes.

Secondly, such harmonious social interaction can be sustained only through a constant focus on overcoming the root causes of conflict — that is, through greater attention to the people's most basic needs and to the long-term sustainability of their economies. These economies are based mainly on the production of goods with limited added value. Moreover, tax revenues often do not meet the needs of the administrative apparatus, limiting a State's control over its territory, and population growth often exceeds economic growth. Disputes over natural resources, which are also a factor in conflict, intensify when they occur in a context of social or cultural heterogeneity.

While this situation of poverty continues, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Côte d'Ivoire said, there will be no lasting peace consolidation process. The international community undoubtedly has an obligation to provide the utmost assistance and support.

In that connection, the problems of peace consolidation in this region can be divided into three areas: security; public institutions and the rule of law, two areas that have been the primary focus of the Security Council's attention through peacekeeping operations; and the socio-economic sphere, which in most cases has received scant attention. In practice, that has delayed the economic recovery of these countries as a means to satisfy basic social needs and contribute to political stability. The recently established Peacebuilding Commission faces that challenge.

Therefore, in order to achieve a balance in these areas, it is essential that concrete measures be taken to strengthen initial steps aimed at economic stabilization and the promotion of development in West Africa, such as, inter alia, broadening tariff exemptions and favourable treatment in other markets; the total write-off or reconversion of foreign debt; promoting and assisting foreign investment; commitment on the part of the international financial institutions to improve basic public services and infrastructure; and access to science and technology.

Thirdly, with regard to the illicit exploitation of natural resources as a source of financing for armed groups — a recurring phenomenon in the region — the implementation of certification mechanisms for the production and commercial chain for raw materials, including rubber, timber and cocoa, could redirect the benefits from those activities towards the people and contribute to tax revenues. The Kimberley Process is undoubtedly a model for the implementation of such mechanisms.

All of that must accompanied by the adoption of measures to strengthen public institutions, the judicial system, democracy and electoral mechanisms and to promote respect for human rights and security sector reform. Included in this area is the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons. In that connection, we must strengthen mechanisms for political dialogue — including those of ancestral traditions — and implement educational curricula promoting peace and development.

Finally, Peru is convinced that the leadership and commitment of these countries' authorities and of their civil societies is essential throughout the peace process. To that end, the involvement of regional forums — such as, in this case, ECOWAS, focusing on socio-economic development, and the African Union, emphasizing peace and security — must continue to be very active. These forums have consistently helped to alleviate crises in the region and must continue to be promoters of peace consolidation in West Africa.

Mr. Duclos (France) (*spoke in French*): Thank you, Mr. President, for having brought us together today to remain mobilized on this important subject.

My delegation fully associates itself with the statement to be made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union.

I should, however, like to add one or two comments. The first is a personal comment, Mr. Minister, to tell you how pleased I am to see you here today and to see a number of other friendly faces around this table. Three years ago, you welcomed me and the other members of the Security Council in your capital. Three years ago, Charles Taylor was still in power and we were anxiously asking ourselves how to make him leave. Sierra Leone was still in a state of shock; its society was really in chaos. Côte d'Ivoire was at the brink of war. So it was a time of great anxiety for the whole region. We were all aware that in that region each country, each situation, each crisis was a piece of a puzzle, and if one or two pieces of that puzzle were sick then that sickness would spread to the entire puzzle.

Three years later, things undoubtedly are better. Taylor is where he should have been for a long time, and in Liberia legitimate transitional authorities have taken over. In Sierra Leone we see some renewal. It is very promising that the Peacebuilding Commission has chosen that country as one of the first on which it will focus its efforts. Finally, in Côte d'Ivoire progress is too slow. There are too many vicissitudes; things are accepted today and then rejected tomorrow.

But that being said, overall in the past three years we have managed to contain the risks of the crisis growing worse, and the process is on the right track. As a French delegate, I strongly hope that in the coming weeks and months our Ivorian friends will all demonstrate a sufficient sense of responsibility so that the elections can take place properly. If that does happen, I think that in a way the region will have come to the end of a cycle of disturbance, disorder and violence, a cycle that will have been overcome little by little. So perhaps today's meeting is an opportunity for us to engage in considering what might happen next, what kind of cycle comes next. To get that discussion going, I will set out a few points.

First, we need to preserve the achievements of ECOWAS, because the successes we have been seeing in these three years are to a large extent due to the actions of some heads of State or of certain countries, and also to ECOWAS, which has shown that it has a considerable capacity to adapt to situations in a strong partnership with the United Nations, in particular with the Security Council. This has to be preserved and developed, because with regard to certain transregional and transborder problems, we have not completed all the work to be done in this house. There is still a lot to be done, especially if we wish to prevent the problem of refugees, to take one example, from destabilizing certain countries such as Guinea, whose representative we heard a moment ago. Thus the first pillar is to preserve what has been achieved by ECOWAS and by its partnership with international institutions.

The second pillar is to develop governance. As you said yourself, Mr. President, at the root of the disturbances that the region has experienced was a serious problem of governance.

The third pillar is to invest in young people and in globalization. I believe Mr. Ould-Abdallah was quite right to refer to the extraordinary potential, both in terms of promise and of danger, of the enormous number of young people in that region. That was the theme of the Bamako meeting, the Africa-France meeting that took place in December. As Mr. Ould-Abdallah rightly said, these young people are very attuned to globalization. Each situation in the region is an element of a regional puzzle, as the region is part of the global puzzle. To date the region has seen only the negative aspects of globalization. Now, in the new cycle, it must have access to the positive aspects, for the benefit of the young people and through them.

Will the new cycle require another form of partnership between the region and the international institutions? I do not have any answer; perhaps it is a bit too early for that. But it is a point that would be interesting to consider in the coming months. Before we get to that point, having opened up the prospects on what our common work could be, I want to come back to a note of realism. Before we can really start this new cycle of hope and of promise, we need to properly complete the cycle that we hope is coming to an end today. For that, one of the transition points, one of the necessary steps is, I think, the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire. Again, I do hope that that can be completed in conditions that the international community supports. Just two days ago this was referred to in the statement by the presidency of the Security Council.

Mr. Ikouebe (Congo) (*spoke in French*): Mr. President, let me say first how pleased I am to see you presiding at this meeting. We wish to congratulate you and the entire delegation of Ghana on the very positive initiative of convening this public debate on peace consolidation in West Africa. I welcome the eminent individuals have come from West Africa and elsewhere, including the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar.

This timely occasion enables the Council to review efforts to consolidate peace and security in that region, which has witnessed some of the bloodiest human tragedies in our continent. In so doing, the Council is pursuing its past positive initiatives to meet the serious crises troubling the region and to respond to the aspirations of people for peace, security and well-being.

For years, West Africa was the symbol of peace and stability and a model of economic integration — before it sank into horrific civil wars that devastated countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and, today, Côte d'Ivoire, which used to be considered the economic lung and the beacon for a region full of promise.

To speak of peace consolidation today in countries such as Liberia or Sierra Leone is not only a source of satisfaction but also a reason to hope for other countries still embroiled in conflict. We welcome the results achieved in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau to heal the wounds of the past, to lay the groundwork for democracy and to set the pace for lasting peace, despite the stumbling blocks that remain.

A return to constitutional rule in these countries following credible democratic elections is not the least of these achievements, which must be welcomed. Everyone still recalls the symbolic value of Mrs. Johnson-Sirleaf's election as President of Liberia. Such events have made it possible to foresee political stability and economic recovery.

However, we remain concerned by the persistence in some of these countries of destabilizing factors, such as the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, the phenomenon of child soldiers, poverty, youth unemployment, corruption, gaps in the judicial system and a lack of resources.

In Côte d'Ivoire, we cannot yet speak of peace consolidation, but we are seeking a solution to enable that country to emerge from the crisis. The Security Council has just adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2006/37) reflecting the main concerns of the international community in the face of this very uncertain situation.

Since we are seeking viable strategies, I wish to recall that, when considering problems relating to peace consolidation, we must understandably turn to the still very valid report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (S/1998/318). Following its consideration of the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report, the General Assembly last year adopted resolution 60/223, and I wish to recall some of the main ideas here. First, Member States and United Nations bodies must consider implementing those recommendations on a priority basis. In addition,

coordinated, sustained and integrated efforts must be pursued by United Nations bodies, Member States, regional and subregional organizations and international and regional financial institutions to prevent conflicts and consolidate peace.

Moreover, I note the determination of the African Union (AU) to strengthen its peacekeeping capacity and to carry out peacekeeping activities in the continent, in close cooperation with the United Nations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter. Here I would note with satisfaction the creation of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the efforts aimed at setting up a continental early warning system and an enhanced mediation capacity.

We also need to support the new Peacebuilding Commission, and we are pleased that Sierra Leone, a country of the subregion, has been chosen for the initial phase of its work.

There is also a need for the African Union Commission, the secretariat of the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the United Nations Secretariat to coordinate their action to implement a programme headed by Africans, involving a strategic framework for post-conflict reconstruction, which the AU can define with a view to peace consolidation and post-conflict peacebuilding. Assistance must be provided to African countries emerging from conflict to restore security, ensure the return of displaced persons and refugees, promote human rights and increase productive, income-producing activities, in particular for young people and former combatants. All of these concerns have been taken into account in the draft presidential statement before us today. That is why my delegation strongly supports the draft statement: it contains all the elements for a realistic and dynamic approach to the problem.

The peace consolidation process requires a cooperative approach that must lead to strengthened cooperation among all actors involved. Foremost among them are the States concerned, which must work together on problems such as child soldiers, the illegal exploitation of natural resources, the implementation of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes, the illicit circulation of small arms and light weapons, and so forth. As for the various United Nations missions and agencies in the subregion, they must work in a concerted and integrated fashion. Here, let me stress that the United Nations Office for West Africa has a major role to play in implementing such an approach, and I thank Mr. Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah for the outstanding statement he made here this morning.

Finally, my delegation welcomes the excellent cooperation existing among the United Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the States of the subregion in achieving the objectives of peace, security and development in West Africa. This is one of the major concerns of the African Union, and the current Chairman of the Union, President Denis Sassou Nguesso, knows that recovery for West Africa is a crucial element of the overall development of our continent, and of its future.

Mr. Burian (Slovakia): Slovakia fully aligns itself with the statement that will be delivered shortly by the representative of Finland on behalf of the European Union. Therefore, Sir, I will limit my statement to the following comments and, as you suggested, will circulate the longer text in writing.

Let me first take this opportunity, Mr. President, to congratulate you and the delegation of Ghana on having organized this important debate. We believe that it will be an important contribution to addressing issues of peace and security in West Africa. We welcome the presence at our meeting of ministers from countries of West Africa and the participation in the discussion of Mr. Chambas, Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In that regard, we would like to emphasize the important role played by ECOWAS in strengthening cooperation, good-neighbourly relations and confidence-building among the countries of West Africa. Regional cooperation and integration represent, in our opinion, the best way to ensure peace consolidation and conflict prevention. This approach is a guarantee of sustainability and long-lasting solutions. ECOWAS is an embodiment of cooperative efforts and local and subregional ownership in addressing common challenges and problems. In that respect, we support the strengthening of its mechanisms and capacities for pursuing peace in the region and deepening interaction and cooperation with the United Nations to that end.

In spite of substantive progress in peace consolidation in West Africa in recent years, many

problems and challenges in the region remain to be tackled.

First, we need to address the cross-border implications of conflicts, including the destructive impact of cross-border trafficking of arms, movement of rebel groups, and so forth. They have been a major threat to regional peace; as we have witnessed in the past, a conflict in one country can ignite the whole subregion. That is why we believe that those threats can be addressed efficiently only through regional cooperative efforts.

Currently, our main concern is related to the volatile situation in Côte d'Ivoire. In that context, we call upon the main stakeholders in Côte d'Ivoire to expedite their efforts to implement the road map and their own commitments undertaken a month ago in Yamoussoukro. The efforts of Prime Minister Banny should receive the full support of all neighbours and countries of the region, with the aim of further strengthening stability in West Africa.

Secondly, the people of the region live in widespread poverty and their nations are among the poorest in the world. One of the reasons for that situation has been the illegal exploitation of natural resources. That has not only helped to finance wars, but also deprived the population of the West African nations of their sources of potential wealth and prosperity. If we speak about peace consolidation in West Africa, we should also speak about the economic consolidation of the region.

Thirdly, both peace and economic consolidation are interlinked with the strengthening of democracy, good governance and respect for human rights. We are glad to see that the majority of the Governments in the region have emerged from democratic elections. In particular, we would like to commend the peoples of Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia for choosing that path after years of bitter conflicts.

We believe that the Peacebuilding Commission will play an important role in supporting peace consolidation processes in West Africa. We are therefore pleased to see that Sierra Leone has become one of the first countries on its agenda.

We believe that it is crucial that the international community provide adequate support to peace consolidation processes in West Africa by providing both expert guidance and development aid. Donor support is crucial and important. It cannot, however, substitute for the reforms necessary to ensure the sustainable development of a country. To achieve that, one needs security and a stable economic and legal environment. Institution-building emerges as crucially important in that regard. National ownership of those processes is instrumental to and a prerequisite for success.

Democratic elections, fighting corruption, introducing sound economic policies and reforms, strengthening the rule of law and reform of the judicial sector all help to increase stability, attract foreign investment and foster the growth of local industries and entrepreneurship.

From the national security viewpoint, security sector reform is pre-eminent. There is widespread understanding within the international community that an ill-governed and unreformed security sector represents a decisive obstacle to the promotion of sustainable development, democracy and peace and is one of the main reasons why countries, after a short period of relative stability, relapse into conflict.

Last month in Bratislava, we organized an expert workshop on security sector reform and we are currently preparing a series of round tables on that topic, to be held in New York this autumn, to stimulate discussion among Member countries on that important topic and to define the best way to address the problems in that area through a coherent and systematic approach within the United Nations system.

In addition, we would also like to organize a seminar on that important issue in Africa, where the question of security sector reform is most urgent. Its aim would be to sensitize the wider population to the importance of the issue and to draw on the practical experience of those who have recent such experience with both the successes and failures of security sector reform. We hope that our initiative will be welcomed as one of the practical contributions of Slovakia to peace consolidation in West Africa.

Finally, we thank Ghana for preparing the draft presidential statement on peace consolidation in West Africa and we support its adoption.

Ms. Sanders (United States of America): My delegation warmly welcomes you, Sir, and the other ministers here to New York and to the United States. I join others in commending you on this useful initiative

of exchanging ideas in the Council on the topic of peace consolidation in West Africa.

I also wish to add my thanks to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ould-Abdallah and Executive Secretary Ibn Chambas for sharing their thoughts on this complicated issue.

West Africa has come a long way from the social chaos and civil war experienced throughout much of the subregion not very long ago, as others here have pointed out. The positive developments in West Africa during the past few years have been remarkable. It is, for many, many West Africans, a better and safer place.

The United States applauds the contributions made by the United Nations in West African countries, including Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Liberia. United Nations efforts in those countries — both its carrots and its sticks — have been essential to the resolution of conflict and subsequent developments that have taken place. We also commend the United Nations continuing efforts to support the peace process in Côte d'Ivoire and urge the Ivorian parties to take all necessary steps to move that process forward.

Many in the international community have contributed money, troops and other means to international efforts supporting the transition to stability and democratic rule in the region. For our part, the United States will continue to support that critical work.

We have taken note of and agree with many of the points that have been made about how to sustain the peace. We would underscore as well that now is not the time for complacency. While there have been some substantial improvements in West Africa, there is important work to be done. International support is still essential for those nations in a variety of areas, including security sector reform, governance, development and financial stability, and in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration processes.

We believe that lasting stability and development in West Africa are most likely to be achieved through the link of democracy and economic freedom. International aid, of course, is a part of the mix, as is private investment, but aid works best and investment will almost certainly follow once freely elected Governments put in place policies of good governance, transparency and rule of law. It is for that reason that we were encouraged by the commitment shown by Liberian President Johnson-Sirleaf to the Governance Economic Management Action Plan. We hope that regional organizations, and especially the Economic Community of West African States, will find more ways to promote those values.

As further incentive to good governance, President Bush proposed in 2002 the Millennium Challenge Account to serve as a concrete mechanism for linking development assistance to developing countries that rule justly, invest wisely in their people, and encourage economic freedom. The growing number of countries in Africa, including West Africa, that are demonstrating their resolve to meet those conditions is heartening. Ghana is a prime example. Just last week, in a signing ceremony in Washington, D.C., witnessed by President John Kufuor and Secretary of State Rice, the Millennium Challenge Corporation signed its largest grant to date — more than half a billion dollars — for anti-poverty programmes in Ghana.

We also believe that a commitment to human rights will help to consolidate peace. Continued efforts throughout the region to develop more democratic and professional security forces are needed. Individuals must be held accountable for their crimes. The commendable efforts of West African leaders to bring Charles Taylor to justice were an important step in that direction.

The United States will remain actively engaged in the spectrum of efforts to consolidate peace in West Africa. We are pleased with the decision of the Peacebuilding Commission to include Sierra Leone in its initial efforts, and we look forward to its recommendations.

Mr. Oshima (Japan): My delegation would like to thank the Ghana delegation for organizing this debate on an important issue — peace consolidation in West Africa — and appreciates the fact that you, Sir, the Foreign Minister of Ghana, are presiding over the deliberations. We also welcome the participation of ministers from the region in this debate, and I thank Mr. Ould-Abdallah, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, for a useful briefing.

A decade ago, several countries in West Africa were racked by wars and civil disturbances, and much of the subregion remained, unfortunately, a centre of

06-46071

extreme instability, violence and much suffering. Today, however, remarkably, we are witnessing in the subregion a transition from conflict to constitutional rule and steady progress towards peace consolidation. In view of those latest welcome developments in West Africa, the timing of this meeting is certainly appropriate.

The conflicts in West Africa have occurred in a geographically compact area and have shared in common many of the same root causes. This has meant inevitably that conflict in one country could easily spill over into another and make solution of the problems more complicated. At the same time, in these circumstances, national and international efforts for finding peace and keeping the peace in a subregional framework of cooperation have become especially important. We therefore highly commend the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for the many invaluable initiatives it has taken and for the key role it undoubtedly will continue to play in the consolidation of peace in the subregion. Here, I thank the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS, Mr. Chambas, for his briefing and his useful observations. We note in particular the role of ECOWAS in the areas of conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and reconstruction, as well as with regard to measures to tackle the problem of small arms. The Japanese Government will continue its support for such regional efforts through measures including direct assistance to the ECOWAS secretariat.

Since the conflicts in West Africa interact with each other, it is important to define common challenges and to coordinate the efforts to achieve peace consolidation in the subregion as a whole. At the Conference on Consolidation of Peace, held in Addis Ababa in February of this year within the framework of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), which my Government co-sponsored, focus was placed on three issues — security; political governance and transition; and community reconstruction and socio-economic development — since those three clusters of issues are considered essential to implementing a comprehensive, integrated and consistent approach to peace consolidation anywhere, including in West Africa.

In a post-conflict society, the first and most important task should be to establish a stable and secure social environment. To that end, the planning and successful implementation of security-sector reform, as well as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and judicial reform, are critically important. Secondly, in the fields of political governance and transition, all parties to a conflict should be made aware of the importance of the democratic process and should respect and participate constructively in the agreed political process. Finally, to achieve community reconstruction and socio-economic development, it is essential to meet basic human needs such as safe water and sanitation, as well as to ensure infrastructure- and capacity-building. It is also important to address issues which if unaddressed could lead to the destabilization of society, including, especially, the problems of ex-combatants and youth unemployment. Development of the private sector is an indispensable ingredient to solving these core problems.

The conditions surrounding peace consolidation in West Africa and the requirements for attaining it differ from country to country, making for differences in the prioritization of tasks. In Côte d'Ivoire, for example, resolving the political confrontation that has led to armed conflict is the most urgent issue, whereas in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau security-sector reform and socio-economic stabilization take first priority.

Sierra Leone is regarded as the most successful example of peace consolidation in West Africa. We must bear in mind, however, that a seemingly successful outcome of United Nations peacekeeping operations may contain pitfalls and that the situation can relapse into chaos, as we have witnessed in the past, including most recently in Timor-Leste. The problems in Timor-Leste clearly show how important it is to address comprehensively the three clusters of core issues which I mentioned earlier, and that, in dealing with peace consolidation in West Africa, one should be fully mindful of the lessons learned from past examples.

In supporting the efforts of Governments in the subregion to address these issues, the international community must extend seamless and generous assistance and appropriate support. To that end, the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission should address the issues in accordance with their specific areas of responsibility. From the Security Council's point of view, the newly established Peacebuilding Commission can offer constructive input

to the Council, particularly with respect to the following two points.

First of all, the Commission should clarify the order of priority of the matters it takes under consideration, within the comprehensive and integrated approach on which Member States have agreed. Secondly, it is necessary for the Commission to study carefully and in detail the peacebuilding strategies of each State under consideration, by listening to, and incorporating into its recommendations, the views of the States concerned, United Nations field missions, experts, non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors, while expecting that each country under consideration will demonstrate full ownership of the process in addressing the issues that are identified. In that respect, we hope that all participants in the forthcoming country-specific meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission, on Sierra Leone and on Burundi, will contribute to a constructive discussion by offering their frank views on the issues at hand.

Japan regards the consolidation of peace as one of the main pillars of its foreign development assistance policy. The TICAD process, initiated in 1993, has made a significant contribution by fostering partnership between African States and the international community. In the TICAD process, we have designated the consolidation of peace as one of three main pillars of assistance to Africa from 2003 on, along with human-centred development and poverty reduction through economic development. During the Gleneagles summit of the Group of Eight countries last year, Prime Minister Koizumi announced the expansion of Japan's assistance for peace consolidation, and at the TICAD Conference on Consolidation of Peace, which I mentioned earlier, the Japanese Government launched a new initiative which included the immediate disbursement of $60 million in assistance by the end of March this year, focusing on West Africa, the Sudan and the Great Lakes region in particular.

In conclusion, Japan intends to continue its active efforts to support peace consolidation in West Africa, and in Africa as a whole, and to play a substantive role in the activities of both the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. In doing so, we sincerely hope that in the near future, West Africa will no longer be seen as a cradle of war and instability but as a beacon of peacebuilding and the consolidation of peace.

Japan thanks the delegation of Ghana for preparing a draft presidential statement, which my delegation supports.

Sir Emyr Jones Parry (United Kingdom): I warmly welcome the initiative of Ghana to hold this debate. It is a particular pleasure, Sir, to welcome you back to the Council and to see you presiding over our work this morning. I should also like to thank our visitors who have already contributed to the debate and to associate the United Kingdom with the statement to be made by the representative of Finland on behalf of the presidency of the European Union.

The United Kingdom has always had a particularly close interest in West Africa, an area which is central to the work of the Security Council. So, I should like to thank His Excellency President John Agyekum Kufuor and the Government of Ghana for their particularly strong and continued commitment to promoting regional peace and stability in West Africa, particularly in Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. If I may say so, Mr. President, your country's record of stability and good governance sets an example to the subregion and more widely, and the United Kingdom stands fully behind Ghana in its efforts.

We very much appreciate the efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to bring peace to the region, and we are committed to working with the African Union and ECOWAS to deliver regional solutions to West African problems. Without that regional approach, there can be no lasting peace and stability. As we have seen only too clearly, adverse events in one State can quickly spill over into neighbouring States.

But compared to the dark days of a few years ago, it is good now to see that peace is embedding itself within West Africa. Of course there are setbacks, as recent events in Côte d'Ivoire have shown, but the region now has a real opportunity to consolidate its fragile but increasingly stable peace. Through this Council, we need to work with the Peacebuilding Commission and, through the efforts of the entire United Nations family, make sure that the United Nations as a whole reinforces its support to West Africa so that it can build upon the gains that are being made.

There is, of course, still a long way to go, but the United Kingdom is committed to the region, through its military and long-term development support. Both

Sierra Leone and Liberia stand on the threshold of becoming regional and African success stories. Both have the opportunity to draw away from conflict once and for all, using instead their many resources to grow and develop. The United Kingdom will support both countries through bilateral aid programmes, through our contribution in the European Union and through the training we are providing to each country.

The arrest of Charles Taylor and his transfer to the Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague was a particular triumph, not only for West Africa but for Africa as a whole, and for the system of international justice, because it demonstrates an ending of impunity. Liberia, like Sierra Leone, therefore also has the chance to build on its peace now. Both countries should focus on nation-building, good governance, the fight against corruption, entrenching democracy through free and fair elections, tackling the root causes of conflict, such as youth unemployment and access to justice, encouraging economic growth and building efficient and effective institutions to deliver national services. The holding of presidential elections in Sierra Leone next year will be a particular test.

We all need to continue to be vigilant, to watch developments in the region carefully. Worries remain over Guinea, which has the potential to destabilize the entire Mano River basin. We must all do what we can to work with regional actors to help bring about a peaceful and democratic transition there. In Côte d'Ivoire, the international working group must ensure that the roadmap to a durable peace, including free and fair elections and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, is fully implemented. In Gambia, the ongoing investigations into the failed coup in March are a continuing concern.

But West Africa has reason to be hopeful. What is clear to me is that we must work to ensure that the countries of the region can succeed together. Any individual failures will only jeopardize the prospect of gains for the others. That is why this thematic debate is so timely. That is why, as the presidential statement we will adopt today calls for, the United Nations in general and this Council in particular must continue to take a regional perspective. The region continues to have the Council's support and engagement as well as that of the rest of the United Nations, financial institutions and the international community at large. It deserves it.

What that means is international support by all who can contribute, so that in any individual country and across the region, we tackle the three essential elements of peacebuilding: the ending and the prevention of conflict, delivering political progress based on institutions and the rule of law, and providing sustained economic development and implementing the Millennium Development Goals. West Africa demands and deserves our support for those goals.

Mr. Manongi (United Republic of Tanzania): We wish to join the other delegations that spoke before us, Mr. President, in welcoming your presence and that of the other ministers in the Council today. We also thank your delegation for having organized this meeting and for having prepared a draft presidential statement, which we heartily support.

This debate offers us yet another opportunity to review progress made in efforts to achieve and consolidate peace and stability in West Africa, to reaffirm the various proposals aimed at ridding the region of conflict and to encourage further action by the Governments of the region in cooperation with the Security Council, other United Nations entities, the donor community and other stakeholders, in order to ensure that West Africa remains free of conflict and embarks on a path towards sustainable economic progress.

As in similar cases elsewhere, there is no shortage of ideas on how to bring peace to conflict areas or, in this case, on maintaining and consolidating peace in post-conflict situations in West Africa. What is lacking, in our opinion, is the will, the resolve and the resources to effectively implement the many recommendations already on the table.

In his several country reports, the Secretary-General makes some very pertinent proposals. The Security Council, for its part, has passed several resolutions and issued presidential statements on situations of armed conflict in West Africa. Since the early 1990s, the Council has deployed peacekeeping operations and established peacebuilding support offices in countries that were in conflict, which resulted in a return to normalcy in Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone and Liberia and hopefully, in Côte d'Ivoire soon. Further, the Council has established sanctions regimes ranging from arms, diamonds, timber and oil embargoes to targeted measures such as travel bans and assets freezes in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia

and Sierra Leone. However, such measures will be successful only if they are closely monitored and adequately supervised to ensure that there are no breaches and if, in cases of non-compliance, remedial action is seen to have been taken.

Besides the United Nations and the Security Council, the West African countries themselves, in collaboration with other countries and institutions, have made a range of recommendations on ways to prevent, manage and resolve conflicts and achieve and consolidate peace in the region. Factors such as lack of good governance, competition for resources, obstruction of democratic processes, poor leadership, corrupt practices, weak institutions and many others have been identified as underlying causes and major sources of social upheaval and civil strife. Many of these practices are in clear breach of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance, which suggests that the Protocol needs to be respected and observed.

We welcome the cooperation in peacekeeping between the United Nations and ECOWAS. Indeed, we pay tribute to the efforts that saw Charles Taylor indicted before the Special Court for Sierra Leone. That signifies the resolve of the international community that impunity will not be tolerated. Further action to deal with impunity should be taken.

We also pay tribute to the work of the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) on its increased subregional cooperation, particularly in preventing illegal cross-border activities.

To conclude, my delegation would like to emphasize the following points.

First, at the regional level, the West African countries must strive to strengthen their institutions of governance and promote good governance, transparency and accountability in the management of natural resources. They must fight corruption and impunity, observe the rule of law, reform the security and judicial sectors, revamp their economies to alleviate poverty and create employment and work with civil society to educate their populations regarding their civic and democratic rights. We encourage them to ensure that such measures are in place.

Secondly, the African Union and its Peace and Security Council, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and ECOWAS must all play their part effectively and work together to forge closer collaboration with countries in conflict and in post-conflict situations in West Africa.

Thirdly, the international community, particularly development partners and the international financial institutions, should continue to provide and should increase financial support to those countries that are recovering from war in West Africa, with a view to preventing the recurrence of conflict.

Fourthly, we encourage countries to develop a relationship based on partnership, rather than on dependency, with their former colonies in West Africa in the interest of achieving, maintaining and consolidating peace and stability.

Finally, we call upon the United Nations, the Security Council and the entire United Nations family, including the Peacebuilding Commission, to enhance their efforts and to work closely with the subregion to increase the momentum in bringing peace to Côte d'Ivoire and to ensure that the investment made in post-conflict countries in West Africa is not lost to chance.

The President: A number of speakers remain on my list. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting now.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.